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Funding social change since 1967

RESIST

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A Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority

December 1998

North Carolina's Capitalists' Pigs

Sharecropping in the New Millennium

STAN GOFF

The independent family farm is headed to extinction," says Don Webb, a former independent swine farmer from Stantonsburg, North Carolina. "The folks who're still on their land in this part of North Carolina—the ones who signed corporate contracts—are in denial. They're sharecroppers now, and ain't nothin' but pride and hopelessness keeps 'em in denial about bein' sharecroppers."

Webb's reference to sharecropping is based on the contractual relationship between farmers (referred to as contract growers) and integrators, the huge corporations who own the genetically engineered livestock. The integrators completely control livestock operations. They arrange for its transportation, processing, and marketing; they dictate facility specs, including approved builders, chemicals, food additives, and pharmaceuticals to be used for maximum growth and disease control; and they specify the management practices the "farmer" will employ.

The contract grower pays for facility construction with huge loans, indebting himself for the long haul, and assumes all financial, legal, and environmental liability.

At the end of the day, the integrator appropriates the majority of the value produced, and the contract grower averages between eight and 10 dollars an hour. Thus Mr. Webb's notion that this is a twenty-first century form of tenancy.

farmer-peasant class had not disappeared but remained strong; so strong, in fact—asserted the professor—that it remained more significant than the wage-laboring class. The current state of agriculture, however, looking at the North Carolina hog industry as an example, makes it appear that Dr. Hook's critique was premature.

The application of modern management practices and technology to pork production has converted farms and slaughterhouses into meat factories. The subdivision of every process into the simplest component tasks has resulted in completely "de-skilling" production. The majority of the actual sweat invested in every stage of production—the precise mechanical application of engineered foods, hormones, and drugs to confined animals—is coming from wage laborers.

The "management" of the grower facility by the "farmer" is conducted in accordance with a strict, formulaic rule-book. The situation for the contract grower is less akin to sharecropping—where a poor farmer applied his or her knowledge of the art of agriculture to production for a "share"—and more akin to the "manager" of a McDonald's hamburger stand: an alienated

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VIOLATIONS & DEFICIENCIES *Found during the first half of 1998*

Discharge of hog waste	60
Discharge into surface water	25
Inadequate freeboard	525
Freeboard less than one-foot	58
Lack of certified operator	12
Over-application of waste	161
Failure to meet setback	3
Inadequate land	33
Crops different than plan	197

TOTAL VIOLATIONS & DEFICIENCIES 1074

Source: NC Division of Water Quality



Fewer than 10 percent of the facilities were inspected for the statistics above. No charges have been filed against farm owners.

While the application of this specific contractual arrangement to agriculture was pioneered by poultry corporations, the underlying trends were predicted as early as Karl Marx. In 1955, Dr. Sidney Hook made the claim (in *Marx and the Marxists: Ambiguous Legacy*, Princeton, 1955) that Marx had erred in his prediction that even agriculture would become "proletarianized." From Hook's perspective in 1955, the

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surrogate, saddled with accountability by his debts and stripped of his creativity.

Farmers who have not signed these contracts have been left far behind. The resulting concentration of the industry is striking. In 1983, the State Department of Agriculture reported over 24,000 swine growers raising just over 2 million head of

hogs. By 1997, fewer than 4,000 growers remained, but the state herd was conservatively estimated at over 10 million, in a state where only around 7 million people reside.

The New Environment

The environmental impact of this growth, most of which occurred in the eastern quarter of the state, has been the subject of

national attention. Ten million swine expel nine million tons of excrement into their environment every year. That amounts to 52,500 tons of nitrogen, 40,000 tons of phosphorus, 37,000 tons of potassium, and a smorgasbord of heavy metals.

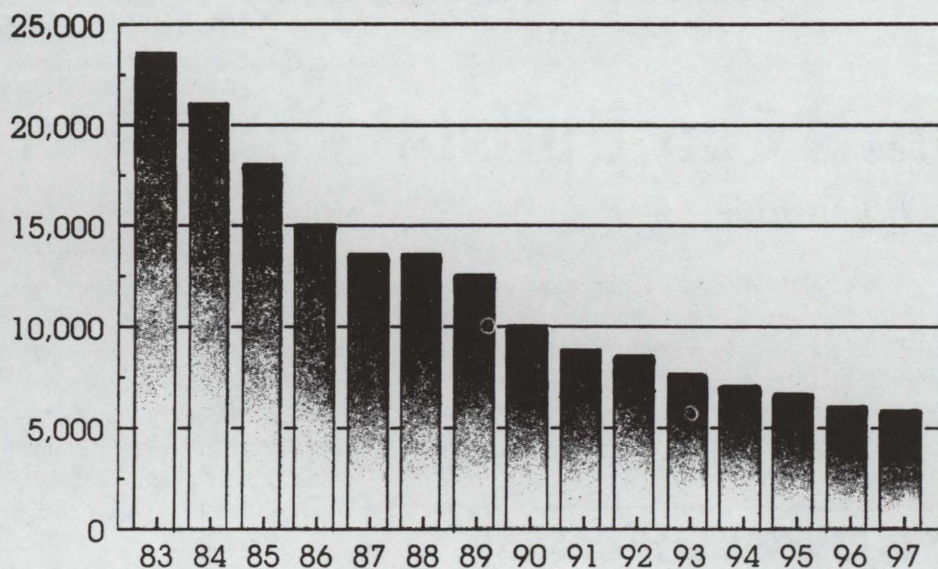
Rick Dove, a Neuse River Keeper, explains that these numbers by themselves are significant. "We are importing over a hundred million pounds of nitrogen from Nebraska in the form of corn, and dumping it into the ecosystem of North Carolina east of Interstate 95 in the form of crap. That nitrogen, just one of the nutrients being imported, does not disappear. It cycles all through the ecosystem here—in the water, the soil, and the air—cycling and recycling. That irrevocably changes the actual composition of the air, soil, and water in a macro way for which we can't even predict the long term consequences."

Add to Dove's macro-analysis the fish kills from algae blooms, the condemned wells, the airborne ammonia that provokes respiratory emergencies, flesh-eating pfiesteria (called the "cell from hell"), and a host of other public health concerns, not

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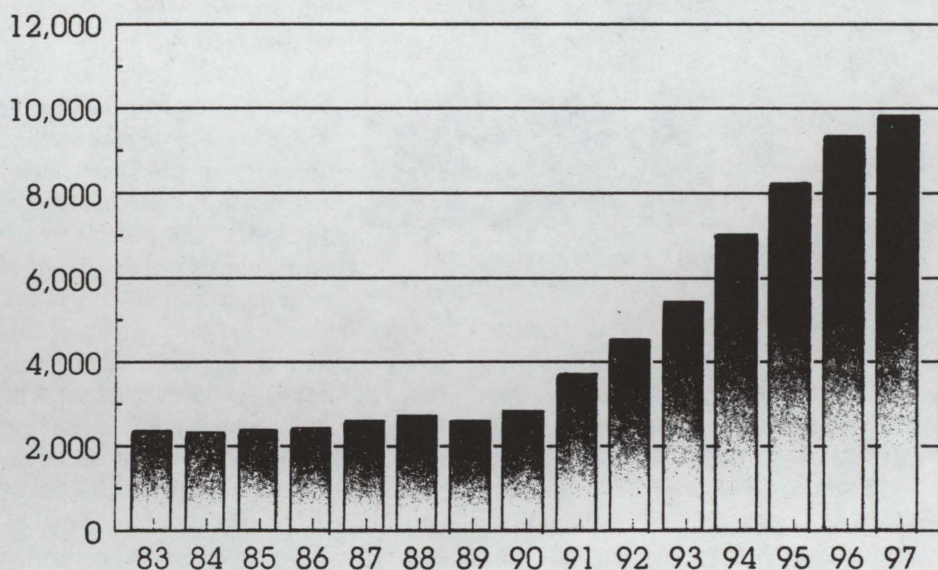
Hog Farms in North Carolina, 1983-1997

Information Source: NC Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services



Hogs and Pigs in North Carolina, 1983-1997

Information Source: NC Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services



RESIST



ILLEGITIMATE AUTHORITY
Funding social change since 1967

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to mention the environmental racism implicit in the siting of these facilities, and the picture is clear. Even *60 Minutes* has found the environmental story worthy of their attention, twice. What have not appeared on the public media's radar screen are the economic implications of corporate agriculture.

saw the mega-slaughterhouse as a threat to the Cape Fear River, to a local aquifer, and as a magnet for even more rapid expansion of pork production in Eastern North Carolina. But Tar Heel, North Carolina, and surrounding Bladen County are among the poorest areas in the state, with the highest levels of unemployment, especially among the African-American and Native Ameri-

[T]he United States Department of Agriculture . . . again demonstrat[ed] the government's willingness to privatize gains on behalf of corporate America but to socialize their losses.

Monopolization and Vertical Integration

In the parlance of modern economists, the consolidation of an industry across one stage of the production process is referred to as horizontal integration. The pulling together of the various stages of the production process under one corporate roof is called vertical integration. Reality is that both forms of "integration" are inextricably linked and occur simultaneously to concentrate wealth in a way that some of us who are wedded to archaic language simply call "monopoly." More and more, monopolization is occurring in the pig industry through interlocking directorates.

A clear example is Smithfield Foods, Inc., whose CEO, Joe Luter, a *wunderkind* of agribusiness, said in 1994 that his mission was to accomplish the total vertical integration of pork production. "Smithfield is on the right side of the major industry and consumer trends," said Luter in his 1993-94 Annual Report. "Vertical integration is the most significant of these. Clearly, the drive to improve the quality, consistency, and value of agricultural products requires collaborative relationships between producers, processors, and marketers."

In North Carolina, he has taken a giant stride in that direction with Smithfield-Tar Heel Division, formerly Carolina Food Processors.

Smithfield-Tar Heel is the largest swine slaughterhouse in the world and the linchpin of North Carolina pork output. Built in 1994, Smithfield ran into opposition from community and environmental groups who

can populations. Smithfield offered 4,000 jobs as the big carrot, and called on their political muscle to do the rest.

Then-State Senator Wendall Murphy, who just happens to be the largest hog producer in the world, and then-Governor Jim Martin were told by Director George Everett of the Division of Environmental Management that the Cape Fear River was at or above nutrient carrying capacity, and that Tar Heel was an inappropriate location for the slaughterhouse. Martin directly intervened with reworked figures for the river, and awarded Luter a waiver for any environmental impact study. The facility was built. Smithfield has since been convicted of over 6,000 discharge violations in Virginia at their Pagan River facility, but North Carolina lets Smithfield monitor its own discharges.

North Carolina integrators have saved a bundle on shipment costs by having a facility of Smithfield-Tar Heel's magnitude in their back yards. Even when Smithfield was operating at their claimed limit of 24,000 kills a day, the state's integrators were still shipping 5,500 hogs a day out of state to be slaughtered. With recent expansions, employees on Smithfield's kill floor are reporting to union organizers that the lines have been sped up to 30,000 kills a day.

But the integrator-processor relationship is deeper than shared competitive need. Proxy statements from Smithfield dated in 1997 showed F. J. Faison of Carroll's Farms, Inc., William Prestage of Prestage Farms, Inc., H. Gordon Maxwell, III, of

Maxwell Foods, Inc., and Wendall Murphy of Murphy Family Farms, Inc., the major integrators in the state, to be the key members of then-Carolina Food Processor's Board of Directors. This is an interlocking directorate; a seamless legal connection between the different phases of the production process that translated into \$1.14 billion in insider business for Smithfield in 1997.

Biggest Fish Eat the Merely Big Ones

The concentration of the industry proceeds apace in other ways as well. The paradox of Smithfield's increased output from 24,000 to 30,000 kills a day is that the market for American pork is plummeting. Processing capacity is up, and the size of the North Carolina herd is up. But four of the six largest foreign importers of American pork—Mexico, Japan, South Korea, and Russia—can no longer afford to buy American with their own currencies in free fall.

In February, when the Japanese recession began to take a serious toll on U.S. pork, the United States Department of Agriculture stepped in and bought up \$30 million worth of the "other white meat" to prop up prices, again demonstrating the government's willingness to privatize gains on behalf of corporate America but to socialize their losses. The USDA is skeptical, however, that it can adequately bail out today's losses.

Production costs for pork are around 42 cents per pound. In February, when prices first fell, the selling price was 36 cents. With the collapses since February, prices have dropped to around 29 cents. So the question should be, why are the big integrators and processors increasing production?

Leland Southard, a pork economist for the USDA attempts to answer. The expansion of production is a monopoly grab by the largest integrators and processors, who can sustain losses longer than their competitors. "The big guys are putting the squeeze on the little guys," says Southard. "The big companies sell at a loss for a while, but the small, independent farmers can't." Farmers around the state, like Gary Grant, who has locked horns with the industry for the past decade, say that Southard is sugar-coating the situation a bit. "Independent hog farmers," says Grant, of the Black Farmers and Agriculturists Association, "are over. This is a case of the biggest fish swallowing the merely big fish."

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Another Fine Pickle for Labor

FLOC Reaches to Cucumber Growers in the Anti-Union South

SANDY SMITH-NONINI

How many of us, as we prowl the super market produce section planning our holiday meal, consider the human sweat behind those crisp cucumbers and neatly wrapped bunches of broccoli?

Although 85 percent of U.S. fruits and vegetables are tended or harvested by hand, farmworkers have long been among the most underpaid and exploited of workers, their lives virtually invisible to most Americans. This is particularly so in the anti-union South, where agribusiness has grown in recent years by recruiting the cheapest and least resistant workers. Today most workers are Spanish-speaking immigrants from Mexico and Central America.

In North Carolina, however, a new organizing drive led by the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC), an Ohio-based farmworkers union, is challenging this 1990s version of a plantation economy. Over the past 18 months, a handful of former farmworkers affiliated with FLOC have been working in southeastern North Carolina to organize cucumber pickers working for the growers of Mount Olive Pickle Co., the second largest pickle producer in the US.

Baldemar Velasquez, FLOC's charismatic president and founder (see box on page five), views FLOC's campaign to "organize the South" as part of a wider social movement. "There is a new Latino labor force all over the South which will be the foundation of the next civil rights movement in United States—a movement that is going to have a brown face."

To date nearly 2,000 cucumber pickers have signed cards authorizing the union to represent them. But Bill Bryan, the CEO of Mt. Olive, maintains that since his company does not hire farmworkers, he has no responsibility to them. He has refused to encourage growers he buys from to recognize the union.

"Everyone takes advantage of a migrant worker," said Ramiro Sarabia, who heads up FLOC's North Carolina campaign from an office in Faison. "The wages are low. Some even get paid less than minimum wage. And everywhere you look you see



Cucumber pickers in North Carolina endure hours of back-breaking work.

Photo by Jeff Whetstone

bad conditions. A union is the only way we're going to improve conditions. FLOC is going to be here a long time, maybe forever."

In Ohio and Michigan, after two decades of struggle, FLOC has achieved fairer working agreements for more than 7,000 farm worker members. FLOC is most well known for its 8-year boycott against Campbell Soup. The union eventually won three-way contracts between Campbell Soup, vegetable growers and farmworkers. FLOC has also achieved a collaboration between Michigan's state government and the private sector on a pool of funds to subsidize housing improvements for farmworkers.

Asked why the union targets food processors rather than the growers, Sarabia put it simply: "They are the ones who have the money." He explained that in agribusiness today many growers contract directly with processors, who supply farmers with seeds and even buy the crop in advance before the seeds go in the ground.

The new FLOC campaign has been endorsed by the North Carolina Council of Churches and is assisted by volunteers from the ecumenical National Farm Workers Ministry, who seek to build community support through the churches. In rural North Carolina, where many church con-

gregations are conservative and more sympathetic to local farmers and companies than to the Mexican immigrants who pick the crops, support for the FLOC campaign has been slow to materialize in the larger community. FLOC supporters have only recently begun to build support among urban churches and community groups.

In June, FLOC organized a four-day march from Mt. Olive to Raleigh, where a rally at the capitol drew attention to farmworker concerns. A highlight of the event was a speech by J. Joseph Gossman, Raleigh's Catholic Bishop, who addressed the distinction between the charity work that many churches engage in and struggles for justice.

"Basic justice demands that people be assured a minimum level of participation in the economy," said Bishop Gossman. "It is wrong for a person or group to be excluded unfairly . . . Farmworkers need to be partners around the table with growers (and) corporations so that the common good of all is reached."

The Latino Face of Southern Farm Labor

North Carolina farmers have felt an economic squeeze as agribusiness processors have increased corporate control over products. To reduce their expenses, growers have relied heavily on the large numbers of foreign workers willing to work at low wages and tolerate marginal living and working conditions.

The state's agricultural industry has grown by leaps and bounds. North Carolina agribusiness has risen to second in the nation for profits. Processors keep the bulk of the profits, while farm owners themselves keep only about a third of gross revenues. Farmworkers receive only about 8 percent of the food income dollar in North Carolina, less than half of the 18 percent the more organized Californian farmworkers receive, according to the 1993 Commission on Agricultural Workers Survey.

The demographics have changed since the 1980s when most migrants were black. Today, 90 percent of the state's more than 340,000 farmworkers are Latino. Since 1990

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North Carolina farmers have begun recruiting large numbers of Spanish-speaking "guestworkers" through the federal H2A program, which provides temporary visas for workers who cultivate and harvest crops during the growing season—typically from May to late October. In eight years the number of guestworkers in the state has grown from zero to 10,000. Most work in cucumbers, tobacco and sweet potatoes.

Velasquez attributes the increased exodus of workers from Mexico's rural areas in part to the economic backlash from NAFTA. Many Mexican small farmers have gone bankrupt since lowered trade barriers led Mexico to import large quantities of cheap U.S.-grown corn.

Conditions in North Carolina

Poor sanitation, hazardous working conditions and poor access to health care are among the explanations why farmworkers, as a population, have abysmal health. Infant mortality rates among farmworkers are a striking 125 percent higher than rates for the general population. Twenty-five farmworkers attended a recent meeting of FLOC supporters in Durham. When FLOC president Baldemar Velasquez asked them who had received health services in the last year, not one farmworker responded.

One of the stumbling blocks in unionization efforts is the fact that federal law has exempted agricultural workers from wage and hour laws that protect other U.S. workers. David Craig, of the Wage and Hour

Division at the North Carolina Department of Labor, explained that, by law, employers of farmworkers are not required to pay them for overtime, and there are no requirements that workers be given breaks during the workday. It is not uncommon for farm workers to labor 10-12 hours a day, seven days a week without adequate sanitation facilities.

Housing facilities compound the problem. Growers have long provided housing for migrant workers in order to ensure an adequate workforce during the season. Farms are often some distance from towns, and most migrants lack transportation.

A *New York Times* expose by Steven Greenhouse published last May concluded that despite the federal housing reforms in

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Velasquez is Not a Typical Labor Leader

SANDY SMITH-NONINI

The kick-off of Farm Labor Organizing Committee's (FLOC's) 1998 organizing season was a Prayer Warrior's Vigil, which found Baldemar Velasquez, the union's president, praying over the pickle vats of the Mt. Olive Pickle Company.

It's not the kind of protest action you'll find many labor leaders engaged in. But no one has ever called Velasquez a typical labor leader.

The winner of a McArthur Genius Award for his innovative leadership of FLOC's 10-year struggle in the Midwest against the Campbell Soup Company, Velasquez has in recent years found himself studying scripture as well as labor strategies. He is now an ordained minister, and sees no conflict in the two roles.

At a recent FLOC planning meeting, Velasquez referenced one of Paul's letters to Corinthians and declared, "The spirit is the Lord, and where the spirit is there is liberty. But the prevailing spirit here in North Carolina is the spirit of bondage left over from slavery. We have to break the spirit of slavery in this state!"

It was the process of the struggle itself, and working with Christian supporters of FLOC, that Velasquez credits for the development of the spiritual side of his organizing. After many years of regarding churches as "an Anglo trick" Velasquez said, "I began looking at things from a different perspective. I used to take advantage of every incident we came across to point up

exploitation. But that doesn't always lead to the solution of problems. Now I see that FLOC is in the business of reconciling repressive relationships."

Velasquez found his religious perspective before he expanded FLOC's organizing to the South. His unique mix of faith and organizing has created a strategy that emphasizes reconciliation rather than the traditionally vicious struggle between farmworkers and farmers, which in a right-to-work state like North Carolina might be a losing proposition.

Velasquez believes that exploitative farmers who claim a Christian faith can be embarrassed into sitting down at the bargaining table. "You have to get the garbage on the table." Opening lines of communication can lead to change. "Fifteen years ago there were some farmers there who would set their dogs on me. Now I go and sit in their kitchens to resolve issues."

FLOC's organizing strategies also contrast with the approach most associate with organized labor. "Other unions do a campaign and, whether they win or lose, they leave afterwards," explained Velasquez. "What I've been telling the AFL-CIO is that if you want to organize workers in the South you have to make a permanent commitment to the community."

To Velasquez, the labor contract is just the beginning of the process. He says, "The development of the union is more important than the union. The union is not the goal, it's a vehicle to build community. It's



Baldemar Velasquez speaks to farm workers. Photo by Sandy Smith-Nonini

not about winning or losing; when a community is developed, victories will come."

Velasquez not only emphasizes a longer term presence, he also pushes a distinctively moral angle. FLOC's strategy in the Midwest was to make Campbell's labor practices a moral issue with the public. That strategy hurt Campbell's national reputation, and is widely credited with bringing the company to the bargaining table. The FLOC campaign is counting on a similar strategy of a long-term struggle that looks to the wider community for moral support of farmworkers' rights in North Carolina.

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1986, "more farmworkers than ever are living in squalor." Part of the reason, according to Greenhouse, is that federal spending on migrant housing plummeted in the last 30 years. In 1998 the government spent only 40 percent of what it spent to house migrants in 1969. The Housing Assistance Council estimates that 800,000 current farmworkers lack adequate housing.

A plus of the H2A program in North Carolina has been more regular housing inspections on those farms that employ official "guestworkers." To date, 1,328 farmers have registered with the state for housing 16,046 migrant workers, but the North Carolina Department of Labor estimated that many more of the state's 22,000 farms that employ farmworkers house migrants, yet remain unregistered and unregulated.

Housing is not the only aspect of farmworkers' lives that escapes regulation. Pesticide use violations are commonplace. The major cause of farmworker illness is poisoning from the 1.2 billion pounds of toxic pesticides that are now used in the United States on virtually all commercial crops. A 1995 report by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences found that pesticides were responsible for more than 300,000 illnesses and 1,000 deaths among farmworkers each year.

New federal standards for worker protection adopted in 1993 require workers who will handle the chemicals to take pesticide safety training classes. However, health workers who offer the classes at migrant clinics estimate the demand for training is far higher than they can meet.

Inspectors are mainly concerned with "restricted use" pesticides. Although 26,000 North Carolina farmers are certified to use them, few farms are inspected. In the first nine months of 1998, 451 farms were inspected, twice the number in the same period in 1997. At this rate it will take about 43 years for state inspectors to visit all North Carolina farmers certified as pesticide users. Only one of the state's eight inspectors speaks Spanish.

And violations seldom result in more than a slap on the wrist. In 1996, the most recent year for which statistics were available, 198 complaints resulted in 61 write-ups for non-compliance and 41 fines. The average fine was only \$370. Interestingly, while commercial users and homeowners face a maximum fine of \$5000 for misuse of



Latinos now account for approximately 90% of the farm workers in North Carolina. Photo by Jeff Whetstone

pesticides, North Carolina farmers, who wield far more clout in the legislature, face a maximum annual fine of only \$500.

Overcoming An Anti-Union Climate

Existing U.S. labor laws offer few protections to farmworkers, who were specifically excluded from the National Labor Relations Act. And, as a "right-to-work" state, North Carolina law permits employers to hire non-union workers, even in a workplace where workers have achieved a union contract. Thus, the state's history of hostility to labor poses a special challenge to FLOC's campaign.

Mt. Olive CEO Bill Bryan claims that FLOC's pressure on his company is unfair. "Our company has been targeted solely because of our name recognition." Asked about his company's responsibility to workers, he said, "We deal in free enterprise. Our only moral responsibility is to treat suppliers as we would like to be treated, which is to allow them to make their own decisions about unionization."

Stan Eury, executive director of the North Carolina Growers Association said unionization would hurt farmers. "We've heard from farmers in the Midwest that the union was the worst thing that's ever happened to them. After FLOC got its contract production went down, and it may go down here if workers unionize. Pickles are not a high profit crop. I think many growers would get out of the business of cucumber growing if workers unionize."

In contrast, Velasquez claims that farmers, as well as farmworkers, have come out well from these contracts in the Midwest, because they now receive a larger price for their crops from processors.

A cucumber grower for Vlasic in Ohio said, "We didn't find FLOC that hard to work with. The farmworkers with FLOC are just looking for a fair shake. We didn't find unionization threatened our business."

In fact, in Ohio the price for 100 pounds of "No. 1" cucumbers (the smallest and most profitable ones) was \$26 this year, up from \$14.50 in 1986. The price in

North Carolina for the same quantity of No. 1's is \$17. Velasquez also cites surveys showing that production is higher in unionized areas of the Midwest than before the FLOC campaign.

But for the moment North Carolina farmers continue to regard FLOC as the enemy. At the FLOC rally in June a man handed out leaflets that read "Support Mt. Olive Pickle Company! Defeat Communism!" At the bottom the acronym "AFL-CIO" was followed by an equal sign and a hammer and sickle.

Virginia Nesmith, executive director of the National Farm Workers Ministry, said the anti-union sentiments of many growers translate into a climate of fear for workers. "Workers who support the union often experience an intense level of intimidation. Public support is very important to create a climate in which workers can come forward."

Wilfredo Rivera, of the Farmworker Project in Benson, agreed, noting that organizers of any kind are not welcome in farmworker camps, which are usually located on the property of growers. "Many camps don't even allow visitors. The owners put up no trespassing signs, even though it's a violation of the workers' tenancy rights. Growers in many areas have a lot of influence over the local sheriff's department. They'll arrest you for visiting a farmworker camp." In fact, the H2A contracts adopted by the NC Growers Association assert that owners have the right to restrict access to farmworker camps.

Last June, attorneys for Farmworker Legal Services were expelled from a work camp on the farm of Cecil Williams, a Nash

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County grower who threatened to have them arrested for attempting to meet with an injured worker on the property. In August, Baldemar Velasquez, Sarabia and two other organizers challenged this policy by visiting the same camp, where the grower had posted a large "No Trespassing" sign. About an hour after their arrival a meeting between the FLOC organizers and about 20 local workers was broken up by Mr. Williams who arrived with two sheriff's cars. When they refused to leave voluntarily, the FLOC organizers were arrested. Although a judge threw out the case, afterwards the local sheriff told organizers he would continue arresting anyone who growers accused of "trespassing."

Building Community Support

In October, around 100 people, including Velasquez, the FLOC organizers and a contingent of 25 farmworkers, gathered on Duke's campus in Durham to plan the next steps in the campaign. Since Bryan continues to reject talks, organizers project that a centerpiece of the campaign beginning in March 1999 will be a boycott of Mt. Olive products throughout the Southeast where the company's market is based.

But the immediate need is to build a community network of support for the farmworker struggle. The involvement of churches, universities and community groups were critical to the success of the FLOC campaign against Campbell Soup. In the end, Velasquez credits the combination of the boycott against Campbell and the moral pressure from the surrounding community with forcing company executives to sit down at the bargaining table with farmworkers and growers.

Velasquez says that the FLOC strategy, in contrast to that of many labor unions, is to "make a permanent commitment to a community." In North Carolina that kind of long term vision may be what is needed to win a victory. But if Velasquez is right about his prediction that the time is ripe for a "new civil rights movement," winning may well depend less on economics than on the strength of moral commitments.

Sandy Smith-Nonini, a Research Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, is conducting research for the Institute for Southern Studies.

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A spokesperson for Murphy Family Farms, Inc., the ironically named top pork producing corporation of former State Senator Murphy, says, "We're taking a hit right now. It's going to take some time for things to turn around. Some producers aren't going to make it." *Tsk! Tsk!* Murphy and the handful of other giant integrators stand not only to gobble up competitors. When they have sustained the last losses they can afford, they will have to jack prices back up to recoup. That will mean drastic reductions in production. Many contract growers will have their contracts canceled. Inevitably, when the de-contracted fold and sell, the big producers will step in to buy the "farms" at fire sale prices. Yet again, vertical integration.

"This industry has shown it cares nothing for farmers, workers, communities, or the environment," said Boyd McCamish, a United Food and Commercial Workers organizer who is involved in NLRB hearings against Smithfield for dozens of violations of labor laws during the UFCW's last organizing drive. "Now they are preparing to cannibalize one another. It's monopoly capitalism at its best."

Labors from Neighbors

McCamish and fellow organizers have been involved in exploratory discussions with community, environmental, and legal groups about building alliances to confront Smithfield in a broad way. "Conditions inside this place are medieval," says Jorge Carrillo. "In one year, out of 4,000 workers, 3,500 lost their jobs, mostly from injuries."

The processor has systematically shifted from a largely African-American work force to a majority Latino work force over the past three years. The perception that Latino workers are more compliant has partly driven the shift, but the ability to pay below the industry standard wage has figured heavily into the entire industry's preference for the foreign born. UFCW Assistant Director for Strategic Operations, Al Zack, believes North Carolina has been targeted for the express purpose of using Latino workers to put downward pressure on wages across the industry nationally. "That's why we have made a long-term commitment to organizing in the Carolinas, where the levels of unionization are the lowest in the country.

"But the opposition is formidable. Two

of the biggest Republican anti-union attack dogs in Congress are Representative Cass Ballinger (R-NC), who has worked tirelessly for years to do away with safety and health regulations for workers, and [recently defeated] Senator Lauch Faircloth (R-NC), who is himself a North Carolina pork producer."

Follow the Money

Pork producers consolidate their friendships among elected officials with generous and frequent campaign contributions. The biggest recipient of hog money in North Carolina in the 1996 election cycle was Governor Jim Hunt, who is a close friend and *confidante* of Wendall Murphy. Dozens of key state elected officials take money from pork producers, and the industry does not take kindly to dissenters.

For example, Republican Cindy Watson of Duplin County, where 2.1 million hogs reside, broke ranks last year and voted to support more stringent regulation of the industry. The industry spent millions to unseat her with a hand-picked candidate in the primary. In this year's election for Watson's House seat, both the Republican and the Democrat candidates are employees of Murphy Family Farms, Inc.

The industry has been systematic in fighting for its interests, economically and politically, and in capitalizing on the most reactionary aspects of Southern culture and ideology. The fight back, on the other hand, remains fragmented along every one of these lines. The most promising developments that might occur in the near term are the strengthening of labor-community alliances for strategically targeted corporate campaigns, and the embryonic campaign to establish a public financing system for political campaigns. The former has the greatest potential for overcoming racial division and the long-standing anti-union ideology in this region, and the latter is essential for divorcing state elected officials from their abject dependence on corporate money to run credible campaigns for elected office.

"It's a little like eating an elephant," said Nan Freeland of the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network. "You have to do it one bite at a time."

Stan Goff is the Organizing Director at Democracy South.

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310 8th Street, Suite 307
Oakland, CA 94607

The National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights was established in 1986, bringing together grassroots community, religious, labor, civil rights and legal organizations to help build a social movement in support of the rights of immigrants and refugees. NNIRR envisions the rights of the foreign born as part of a broader human and civil rights agenda in the United States. NNIRR is committed to challenging the current assault on policies and laws governing the treatment of immigrants, and in building an awareness in the U.S. of the need for international protections and solidarity with organizations and movements for migrants' rights in other countries.

A \$2,000 grant from Resist will support the National INS Raids Task Force and its campaign to end immigration raids.

Somos Un Pueblo Unido

P.O. Box 31118
Santa Fe, NM 87594

Somos Un Pueblo Unido was founded in 1995 after California's approval of Proposition 187. In response, a diverse group of people, including long-term and recent immigrants, teachers, retired state workers, and other concerned citizens, came together to prevent a parallel erosion of human rights from occurring in New Mexico. As a result, the state legislature passed a memorial establishing that New Mexico welcomes immigrants and supports their rights to education, medical and social services. *Somos* was also successful in getting the Santa Fe School Board to pass a resolution in October, 1996 ensuring that no child would be denied educational services based upon their national origin or immigration status.

A \$2,000 grant from Resist will support the INS Raids Awareness Campaign, which is affiliated with NNIRR's work, and highlights abusive discriminatory INS practices.

Project Uplift

1601 2nd Avenue North, Suite 320
Great Falls, MT 59403-1399

Project Uplift was initially formed in 1994 to address proposed "welfare reform" legislation in the Montana legislature. Currently, Project Uplift is a grassroots coalition of low-income residents and concerned citizens working towards the principle of economic justice. Recently, Project Uplift developed and negotiated a "Welfare Bill of Rights" with the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services. As a result of a series of collaborative efforts with other Montana social action programs, the State agreed to distribute, and abide by, this bill of rights in its work with welfare program recipients.

A \$1,500 grant from Resist will provide general support for this coalition as they seek to engage in proactive strategies for low-income people.

VA Black Lung Association

P.O. Box 1760
Richlands, VA 24641

Black lung disease (pneumoconiosis) is an occupationally caused progressive, incurable disease that affects coal miners, causing extreme shortness of breath, heart disease and lung failure. Miners contract black lung disease as a result of their exposure to coal dust. In 1988, 32 disabled coal miners and their families founded the Virginia Black Lung Association out of frustration with oppressive regulations enacted by the federal government regarding access to health benefits. VBLA has grown to 2,141 members and has a three-pronged agenda: 1) reform the Black Lung Benefits Program; 2) develop leadership and advocacy skills among miners and their families; and 3) network with other advocacy groups on both the local and the national level for better mine health and safety.

A \$2,000 grant from Resist will fund the purchase of computer equipment to enable better communication between members of this organization.

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